

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 18, 2010

Agenda Item: Appeal of denied Georgetown Lake ice fishing contest permit

Division: Fish & Wildlife (Fish Bureau) **Action Needed:** Approve, approve w/ modification, or deny

Time Needed on Agenda:

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Background

FWP denied an ice fishing contest application for Georgetown Lake scheduled for January 2011. The contest would have 200 people and prizes for catches of kokanee salmon. The contest is a fund raiser for the Carroll College Outreach Team. In 2009, this contest was approved by FWP and, after appeal by a local sportman's group, by the FWP Commission. Public comment varied between 2009 and 2010. There was significant public support for the contest in 2009 whereas there was no support specifically for this application in 2010. The 2010 application and derby rules are similar to 2009. Only 10 kokanee are proposed per person per day. All trout must be released immediately. Potential crowding issues are proposed to be alleviated by spreading out contestants and using marshals. There is no fee proposed, but donations would be requested. Prizes are donated items.

Georgetown Lake is consistently ranked in the top 10 in the state for fishing pressure, which is a significant achievement given its small size. Here is some fishing pressure data from 2009:

<u>Lake</u>	<u>Angler Days</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Size of Lake</u>
Fort Peck Lake	82,109	5 th	249,240 acres.
Holter Reservoir	75,838	6 th	3,667 acres.
Georgetown	73,600	7th	2,818 acres
Flathead Lake	62,740	9 th	122,885 acres

About 35 percent of the annual pressure on Georgetown Lake comes in winter. There is an abundance of kokanee salmon in the lake, reflected by the lake's no harvest limit on the species. Trout, meanwhile, have a five fish limit and no brook trout can be kept, though two brook trout can be kept starting beginning in March.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Over the 30-day public comment period, five comments were received; one in general support of all contests; and three opposed; and one, submitted late, also opposed. Those opposed mostly expressed concern for crowding. None specifically expressed support for this contest. Biologically, the harvest would not affect the robust kokanee salmon population.

Alternatives and Analysis

FWP initially denied the application due to public concern for crowding during the contest. It remains a reasonable concern given the high angling pressure and number of contestants. The alternatives of approving the application or approving with modification with public opposition and no support for this specific contest were not deemed justifiable.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Deny the application. Public comment on crowding, lack of public support, high angler use, and high contestant numbers support denial.

Proposed Motion

Move that the 2nd Annual Jiggin' at Georgetown fishing contest be denied.